

Before the FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, DC 20554

In the Matter of 2002 Biennial Regulatory Review -
Review of the Commission's Broadcast Ownership Rules
and Other Rules Adopted Pursuant to Section 202
of the Telecommunications Act of 1996,
Notice of Proposed Rulemaking,
MM Docket No. 02-277, (rel. Sept. 23, 2002)

To: The Secretary, FCC Commissioners, and Chief, Media Bureau

I am writing to you today to comment on Docket No. 02-277, the Biennial Review of the FCC's broadcast media ownership rules. In its goals to promote competition, diversity and localism in today's media market, I strongly believe that the FCC should retain all of the current media ownership rules now in question. Indeed, rather than deregulate ownership, the FCC should consider imposing stricter limits on the number and kind of media outlets one entity can own. Such rules serve the public interest by limiting the market power of already huge companies in the broadcast industry.

I do not believe that the studies commissioned by the FCC accurately demonstrate the negative affects media deregulation and consolidation have had on media diversity. For instance, the studies related to radio fail to mention that deregulation has already wiped out 10,000 jobs in the radio industry and that much of the programming now being carried on smaller stations is nationally syndicated material. While there may indeed be more sources of media than ever before, the spectrum of views presented have become more limited. More importantly, the views that are presented do not emerge from the communities these media serve, but instead mirror the the climate of elite opinion in Washington D.C., New York and Los Angeles where most of the syndicated national fare is produced. These changes might be good for the corporate bottom line, but they are bad news for democracy.

The right to carry on informed debate and discussion of current events is part of the founding philosophy of our nation. Our forefathers believed that democracy was best served by a diverse marketplace of ideas. If the FCC allows our media outlets to merge, our ability to have an open, informed discussion from a wide variety of viewpoints will be compromised.

The public interest will best be served by preserving media ownership rules in question in this proceeding. And it would be enhanced by rolling back the deregulation of the past few years.

I support the FCC's plan to hold a public hearing on this matter in Richmond, VA in February 2003. I strongly encourage the Commission to hold similar hearings around the country and solicit the widest possible participation from the public. The rarified, lawyerly atmosphere of an FCC rulemaking is not an appropriate decision-making venue when questions as profound as the freedom of our media are at stake. I encourage the Commissioners to

come out and meet some of the people who do not have a financial interest in this issue, but a social interest.

With the serious impact these rule changes will have on our democracy, it is important that the Commission take the time to review these issues more thoroughly and allow the American people to have a meaningful say in the process.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Dr. Stephen H. Macek
Speech Communication
North Central College